

high-resolution detailed topographic maps from keratoscope pictures of the corneal surface. "Improved corneal topography

analysis," the study says, "should find wide clinical application in the study of refractive corneal surgery techniques and

in the study of corneal disorders that cause irregular astigmatism.

## Presculpted, Banked Cartilage for Middle Ear Reconstruction

Using banked, presculpted rib cartilage from cadaver donors is an effective means of rebuilding the bones of the middle ear for hearing restoration, says a study in the February *Archives of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery*. The preshaped homologous transplants, further fitted in the operating room to meet a patient's anatomic needs, are as effective as plastic materials for reconstruction but are not resorbed or extruded over time, as occurs with the artificial implants, says Richard A. Chole, M.D., Ph.D. of the University of California-Davis. Chole studied 102 reconstruction procedures using the banked cartilage. Of the 51 transplants available for follow-up after three years,

nearly 97 percent of the initial "rejected" as a result of a hearing improvement was maintained. In addition, no transplants were extruded or

foreign-body reaction, Chole says, and resorption was minimal.

## Physicians Could Help Reduce Gun Threat to Children

Physicians should play a key role in efforts to reduce the safety threat that guns in the home pose to children, says a report in February's *American Journal of Diseases of Children* [AJDC]. Patti J. Patterson, M.D., and Leigh R. Smith, M.D. of the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), Galveston, say doctors—especially pediatricians—have successfully promoted child safety laws for automobiles, poisons and flammable fabrics; "a similar effort should be made with

regard to firearms." Patterson and Smith surveyed 150 families from the UTMB pediatric outpatient clinic and found that 38 percent kept at least one gun in the home; more than half this group said the gun was loaded at all times and 10 percent said it was loaded, unlocked and within a child's reach. Despite a limited study sample, "the overall importance of household firearms as a threat to safety should not be overlooked," the authors say.

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